



Caring for Influenza (Flu) at Home

What is Flu and how does it spread?

Influenza (Flu) is a serious viral infection spread by infected particles or droplets to nearby people when coughing or sneezing. These particles can also spread by landing on surfaces and transfer to hands that touch the surface.

Flu symptoms can vary from mild to very severe and include fever, sore throat, cough, body aches, headache and extreme tiredness. Vomiting and diarrhoea is also experienced in some people especially children.

Flu can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia, respiratory failure and even death on some occasions. People who already suffer from chronic medical conditions are most at risk of severe complications as well as pregnant women, very young children or elderly folk.

How can I avoid catching Flu?

- **Get vaccinated**
- Try to stay away from people who are sick or large gatherings of people during the Flu season where germs can spread easily by coughing and sneezing.
- If you do, get sick stay home from work or school to prevent spreading Flu to others.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and throw tissue in the rubbish bin after use.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. Alcoholic hand rubs or gels are also useful to clean hands.
- Try not to touch your eyes nose or mouth. Flu germs on your hands can spread that way.

Caring for Flu at home

If you are caring for someone sick with flu at home, it is important to protect yourself and anyone else who is not sick from catching Flu.

- Remind the sick person to cover their mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and wash their hands or use the alcohol rub often to remove germs.
- Keep the sick person in a separate room away from others with the door closed. Where possible use a separate bathroom.
- Unless it is necessary for medical treatment, people with Flu should stay home while they have a fever and are most infectious. (7 days after the start of symptoms in adults and 10 days in children) If going out a loose fitting respiratory mask will help prevent spread of infection.
- The sick person needs plenty of rest and clear fluids such as water, broths or sports drinks to prevent dehydration.
- Check with their doctor if they have any chronic medical conditions whether they need any special care or anti-viral medicine
- Watch for warning signs that need medical attention

When to seek emergency medical care

Get medical care right away, if the sick person has:

- Difficulty in breathing or chest pain
- Blue discoloration of the lips
- Continuously vomiting and cannot retain fluids
- Signs of dehydration such as no passing of urine, dizziness when standing or in infants a lack of tears when crying
- Seizures, becomes confused or is less rousable

Household cleaning, laundry and waste

- Clean any surfaces around the sick person frequently including bedside tables, bathroom or toys to remove any germs that may have settled.
- Bag any used tissues and dispose in general waste. Disposable gloves are handy to clean and dispose of rubbish from the sick person
- Clean linen, crockery and cutlery from the sick person in the normal manner not separately, but do not share until cleaned.
- It is best to wash linen on a hot cycle with laundry detergent or tumble dry on a hot cycle. Avoid shaking the soiled linen or hugging it to you before washing or when changing the bed.

Key points to remember

- Try to avoid face-to-face closeness with the sick person to prevent them coughing or sneezing into your face. (If holding a child try to face them away from you or place their chin on your shoulder)
Wearing a mask is helpful when caring for the sick person.
- Always wash your hands after such a contact.
- Watch for symptoms in yourself and other members of the household
- Discourage any visitors, as the telephone is safer until past the infectious stage.

Who can I contact?

- Your local doctor
- For symptoms, requiring emergency care present to your nearest Emergency Department or phone 000 for Ambulance Service.

Disclaimer: The information contained in the brochure is intended to support, not replace, discussion with your doctor or health care professionals.

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